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# AN APPEAL

TO THE

# PEOPLE OF ILLINOIS

ON THE

# QUESTION

OF A

# CONVENTION

BY MORRIS BIRKBECK

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Page 21--33



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PRINTED BY C. JONES, JULY, 1823



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## AN APPEAL ON THE QUESTION OF A CONVENTION.

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(By Morris Birkbeck.)

FELLOW CITIZENS.—The framers of our social compact, profiting by the experience of all nations, to secure from light and capricious changes those institutions of government, which, on account of their superior importance, are coupled with first principles and embodied in the constitution, did most wisely ordain that a solemn measure of a convention should not be proposed to the people by any authority short of a majority of two-thirds of the general assembly. We are invited to vote on this subject, at the next election, by a very different sort of majority from that intended by the constitution, and framed after a new fashion, which it will be right for us to examine before we give it our countenance. The history of the business appears to be, shortly, this:

Certain members of that body, anxious to introduce a forbidden system amongst us, formed themselves into a junto or caucus soon after the commencement of the session, and offered to other members their votes in favor of any proposition which those members had an interest in carrying, in consideration of their pledging themselves to support the measure of a convention. By the accession of these, their first victims, the caucus became, in fact, the legislature, as, by comprising a majority of both houses, it was capable of carrying every question, that one excepted. Others of your representatives, who had not, as yet, bartered away their independence, soon discovered that they were completely at the mercy of the junto; and, in order to recover the means of serving their constituents on those points of local interest, which, when combined, form the general weal, suffered themselves, one by one, to be brought over, until the faction had acquired nearly two-thirds of the whole number of votes, the strength requisite for carrying their favorite measure—without the accomplishment of which, they declared, they would not quit Vandalia.

They repeatedly tried their strength by preparatory resolutions, and at length, on the fifth of February, brought forward the main question, but it was decided against them by a majority of two. They were not, however, to be so baffled; they carried a vote of re-consideration, and the resolution was laid upon the table.

On the eleventh of February, having gained over the deficient votes by means which it might seem invidious to detail, the resolution was

again brought forward, and *again* lost through the defection of a member, who, on the former occasion, had voted for it. Notwithstanding this second decision, they persevered in their purpose.

One of the party, although in the constitutional minority on the last division, again moved a reconsideration of the question. The speaker declared the motion to be out of order, because the mover was in the minority. They attempted to over-rule the decision of the speaker, by an appeal to the house, but the chair was supported by a majority of three.

Here, it might be supposed, the question was finally decided, and would have been allowed to rest; but it proved otherwise. On the succeeding day *the vote confirming the speaker's decision was reversed*, and the motion for re-consideration, made by one of the minority, *carried*; and to extinguish the vote of the defaulter, and create a favorable one in the room of it, as no such vote could be found in the house, they had recourse to a proceeding the most unjust, and impudently tyrannical, that ever, as I believe, disgraced the legislature of a free country: By an arbitrary resolution, in direct violation of law, they expelled one of your representatives, who had been established in his seat by the decision of the house, and introduced in his room, a man favorable to their views, who had been declared, by the same decision, not to be a representative. Having accomplished this, they brought forward the main question the third time, and *carried it* by the vote of this man, whom they created a member for the express purpose, at the close of the session.

Now, fellow citizens! I ask you how you feel under this sort of legislation? and the reply I seem to hear, from one end of the State to the other, is this: "We have been insulted and abused by a base faction; but, unless it be by the appointment of such men for our representatives, we are not, as yet, degraded. The infamy rests, at present, on the heads of these persons—and there let it remain! If we should give our sanction to their conduct, by voting for a convention, at their instigation—then, indeed, would disgrace cover the country, and to be a citizen of Illinois will be no honorable distinction."

This question having been thus forced upon the people, in defiance of law and constitution, our course, in regard to it, is plain: We must, on the present occasion, vote against a convention, or become accomplices in these nefarious doings. There are, no doubt, various particulars in our institutions which require amendment, as, in the early stages of a government, will naturally be the case. It is new, and has hardly had a fair trial. At a proper season, when our *honest* representatives, after due deliberation, shall, by a constitutional majority, have resolved to propose it to us, let us then have a convention. The defects of the present system are not of a nature so urgent as to forbid a short delay, and we shall be better qualified for a revision of the constitution from longer experience. A change in the county commissioners' courts—the removal of the seat of government, and *annual* sessions of the legislature—are, I believe, the chief amendments talked of. If the objections to the thing, *as now proposed*, had no existence, it would be well for us to count the cost of a



convention, and to consider, if, in the exhausted, and more than exhausted, the insolvent, state of the treasury, it would be discreet to add that expense to our present pecuniary embarrassment. In a few years it is probable we may better afford it: but, just now, the charge of the remedy, I do think, would be felt by the people a greater grievance than all the diseases complained of.

But the disease in the legislature demands our *immediate* attention; for there the interests of the public have been bought and sold in the face of day; the law of elections, and the established rules of legislative proceedings, have been set at nought, in order to thrust this question upon us. Such a scene of base intrigue was never before exhibited under a representative government, as prevailed at Vandalia through the last session.

It cannot be for the interest or the honour of the citizens of Illinois that their affairs should be so conducted. Even if the object were beneficial, and should accord with our wishes, to receive it through so impure a channel, would be unworthy of republicans. When we require a convention, we can have one, according to the constitution, through a sound and respectable legislature. We are not reduced to the humiliation of obtaining it by intrigue and chicanery, or of accepting it from hands which have violated our rights in the legislative assembly, their proper sanctuary! Though nugatory in point of law, as having been illegally and corruptly carried, this measure will become a precedent for similar abuses, if it receive the sanction of the people. Should the mines of Golconda be offered to us on these terms, we should reject the offer with disdain. Such are, or ought to be, our reflections at this important crisis.

Injustice, committed by a private citizen, is bounded in its mischief by the nature of the act, and the perpetrator, being an object of contempt, is not likely to prejudice public morals by the influence of example. Enormities are committed by despots in the wantonness of power, and the people submit until they acquire the means of avenging themselves: but, as they detest the tyrant, and abhor tyranny, their sense of right may not be vitiated by the crimes of their rulers. But when a domineering faction, in a representative government, commits injustice, covering its deeds with the forms of legal enactment, a people, *conscious of these proceedings*, and submitting to them because they may chance to accord with their inclination or supposed interest, bows its neck to the yoke, and is unworthy to rank among republicans:—because, from that time, their government ceases to be a representative government. One faction, having accomplished its purpose, gives place to another, and that to a third—until it sinks into despotism of the meanest character; a tyranny of knaves, without honour or principle, or public spirit! What that is worth preserving can remain alive under such a system?

“The end justifies the means,” say these lawless politicians, but it is a villainous plea, and would end in the destruction of our liberties. Would to heaven *that* were all the end they aim at! To it we should soon apply a remedy. Slavery is their avowed object—accursed slavery! Doubly accursed—in those who inflict it, and in its miserable victims! When once introduced, for this, no remedy would be

found. My fellow citizens! for the sake of our posterity—in the name of religion, in the name of virtue—I implore you to act uprightly at the ensuing election: *Let us save our country!* not from the evil of political corruption merely, but from this, the concentration of all the evils which afflict humanity.

It is to you who have expended your labor and capital on permanent improvements, and considered yourselves settled for life in this State, with your families around you—that I have appealed thus earnestly, and I trust not in vain. There are others, and these form a large majority of the advocates of this scheme, who, like birds of passage, belonging to no country in particular, look only to the interest of the moment, and are prepared to vote for a convention as an inlet to slavery, under the notion that it might advance the price of land, and enable them to sell their farms to advantage, and *more off*. And there are persons—as I have heard with sorrow and indignation—whose talents and standing entitle them to consideration, who are availing themselves of this topic, so important to our future well-being, merely as an engine of temporary, party politics.—Supposing (falsely as I believe and hope) that popularity is on the side of slavery, they take that side, and, regardless of its calamitous consequences, they can—just to gain an advantage over rivals, who are supporting the cause of freedom—prostitute their influence to the ruin of their country!—Such, I am told, is the position taken by some of the most prominent and zealous supporters of a convention; and thus, fellow citizens, may our dearest interests be trifled with by disappointed ambition, which, unless it can govern, will not hesitate to destroy!

From a sentiment of clemency or of kindness, I forbear naming either these individuals, or the leaders of the faction in the legislature. I arraign their proceedings at the bar of the public; but my controversy is with the measures, not with the men. This pamphlet, should it be circulated beyond the sphere of our contest, or survive its decision, shall not be the instrument of stamping with ignominy the memory of any of my fellow citizens. There may be extenuating circumstances—infirmary of judgment, deeply-rooted prejudice, human weakness, in short, of various shapes, moral and intellectual, to save from absolute baseness of intention the projectors of enormous mischief. It is enough for us to see the actions in their true character; we will leave the agents to settle the account of motives with their own conscience, and proceed to consider what would be the consequences of their success.

In regard to the price of land, no advantage *could* ensue from the admission of slavery. You might open the market to purchasers from the slave states, but, by so doing, you would exclude all from every state and every country who are averse to slavery. The owners of negroes, who may be inclined to change their abode, have stronger inducements towards the southern states of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana than to ours. This is confirmed by the experience of Missouri where the price of land is said to be even lower than with us and the difficulty of selling at least equal. The want of money, also, prevails equally in the neighbouring slave states, and is quite sufficient to prevent the sale of their own lands, which is necessary, in

the first place, to enable them to remove at all. It is vain, therefore, to look to that quarter for many buyers; and it would surely be impolitick to confine the market to a class of purchasers who have not the means of purchasing, and if they had the means would not bring them to us, but would carry them farther south.

The exclusion of every other class for the sake of those who have neither the ability nor the inclination to buy, absurd as it would be, is not the only evil: Many more estates would immediately be offered for sale, so as to add to the glut in the market. For numbers, who had, as they hoped, made permanent homes for themselves and their families in this State, would hasten away at the approach of slavery, disposing of their property under every disadvantage; and thus, more sellers than buyers being created by this calamitous and foolish measure, the price of land would fall even below its present rate.

Let us now turn our thoughts to those who would be excluded by slavery, and we shall discover that they are far more numerous than those whom it would invite.

Multitudes of the farming class, and others, in the old countries of Europe, (from whence we all derive our origin) are at this time driven by hard necessity to seek new homes. Their attention is drawn in a particular manner towards this State, as that section of the Union best adapted to their views and habits. It has been represented to them, and they look to it as a land of freedom; but if we make it a land of slaves they will not come here. "No matter" you may reply, "we want no English, or Scotch, or Irish, or Dutch settlers." But remember, they will bring *capital*; the farmers will buy your land, if you are disposed to sell. Those of other classes will establish manufactures and create a market for produce; and in due time they will all become, with their children after them, as you are, American Citizens. A numerous class of purchasers from the eastern states, who are beginning to form a just estimate of the advantages of our prairie country, would also be excluded, as well as the friends of freedom in the slave states, numbers of whom would be likely to settle here if we retain our integrity.

Thus it is clear that the admission of slavery would operate most powerfully against that very interest which is a leading object with a majority of its advocates. It would throw many more farms on the market, and diminish instead of increasing the number of buyers.

But you, who have at heart the future prosperity of the State, as well as the interest of the present hour, let me entreat you to pause, and direct your views a little forward, before you allow temporary motives to bias your judgment towards any measure which may favor the admission of slavery into our republic.

Consider, that however small in number and contemptible in moral or physical power the negroes might be at their first introduction, they would increase in the natural course of population and by the accession of fresh supplies, in a much higher ratio than the whites; so that in a limited period they would become in our republican Illinois, the *many* who are doomed to labor for the *few*.

Between these two classes, under the most despotick governments, excluding slavery, there may and do exist various strong ties of a

political and social nature. They slide into each other by insensible gradations, forming no line of absolute demarkation. They have sundry common interests. They have family connections. Individuals are perpetually changing positions; the high are reduced by extravagance or misfortune; the low advance themselves by industry and enterprise. Therefore these classes are not naturally and of necessity hostile to each other. In peace they are friends, and fellow soldiers in war.

But in a nation composed of *free whites* and *negro slaves*, society, if it may be called such, is in a most deplorable condition. One portion of the people is separated from the other by an impassable barrier, in regard to all that binds man to man in social fellowship. They must not eat together, or pray together! There are no inter-marriages. There is no change of position producing a common sympathy. One class possesses—all; the other—nothing. The laws are made by one class and only known to the other by their partial severity. It is not a republic—this: it is a confederacy of tyrants, pure aristocratical despotism!

We may transfer the labors of cultivation to negroes, but there is a toil far more severe than the cultivation of the soil, commencing from the moment of their introduction, from which slavery cannot relieve us—the toil of protecting the morals of our youths from contamination and our persons and property from natural and deadly foes, whom we admit into the heart of our concerns. We can transfer no part of this to the negroes. It will be all our own! It will “grow with their growth and strengthen with their strength” until at length even *their* condition may be enviable in comparison with ours. These are evils we cannot escape or mitigate; an incurable and increasing plague, in exchange for virtue, peace and security, which no accumulation of property can ever compensate.

Consider the actual condition of the older slave states. South Carolina has just escaped a dreadful catastrophe; Virginia a few years ago also escaped. But the fire is still there, though smothered for a time under the ashes of former conflagrations. The sword remains over their heads, suspended by a single hair! Of this they are sensible; witness their painful precautions; the laws against education of slaves; the arms and barricaded dwellings; witness the nightly patrols, pervading the country like an immense camp.—A dreadful inheritance is slavery—even for those who inflict it!

There is no need to expatiate on the evils of slavery; they are too well understood in this country to require description. We all know—its advocates themselves know—that it comprehends every shade of crime, every degree of misery! And shall we, the free citizens of Illinois, hold forth our arms to embrace this monster? Shall we *invite* slavery with its train of crimes and calamities, and leave it a curse to our posterity, for the sake of a little convenience—a little temporary, precarious profit?

If such be the case, as stated above, where slavery has been established as to have become like the natural order of things, here, on its *forced* introduction, our condition would be still more difficult and dangerous.



The slave holders of Illinois, would suffer under the increasing consciousness that their lands were cultivated and their families surrounded, not by free and happy dependents, partaking of the general prosperity, but by degraded creatures, prone to theft and perhaps plotting their destruction. This, they would suffer, in common with others. But the unspeakable abhorrence in which slavery is held by a great proportion of their fellow citizens, who took refuge in this state as an asylum from that calamity, would render it impossible to carry into effect the brutalizing system by which alone these devoted beings are kept down when their numbers become considerable.

Having founded our constitution on the inalienable rights of man, and entered into a compact with each other and with the general government that slavery shall not hereafter be introduced, it will be vain to urge its legality, although a short-sighted majority should obtain its admission. As well might they legalize robbery and murder.

Its introduction would always be felt by a very large part of the community as an invasion of their rights: they would view it as it stalked through the land, with a horror and impatient loathing as they would the intrusion of an armed foe. No laws on the subject could assuage the sense of injury in the minds of those persons, or repress the indignation they would experience on beholding their fellow creatures—bought and sold and trampled upon: no fears, as to consequences, could restrain them from the expression of their sentiments. Hence perpetual animosities and hatred would prevail between neighbours, destroying all social enjoyment, and that fellow feeling among the citizens which is essential to the general happiness and prosperity, would cease forever.

A people, on assuming the exercises of its rights, may discover *wrongs* in its old institutions which it cannot redress without the hazard of still greater: or, the influence of custom, or of avarice, or of ignorance in a portion of the community, may prevent it.

Thus it was with the colonies on their emancipation from Great Britain. Among the institutions of their society there existed a *system of wrong*, which, for some, or all of the causes above assigned, was not redressed. That system was slavery. It was not actually tolerated by the constitution, or meant to be, as no exception in its favor appears. The evil was suffered to exist, *because it could not be destroyed*.

Under the sacred transcript of universal rights on which the people of the United States founded their constitution, if it had not pre-existed in the community, it could not have been introduced: they could not have *created* slavery: nor can the people of Illinois *create* it for the same reason.

It is, moreover, expressly prohibited in this State, not only by our own compact above alluded to, but by the ordinance of Congress providing against its introduction into the North Western Territory or the states formed therefrom: which ordinance is the supreme law of the land, according to article 6 of the constitution of the United States which is as follows:

*"This constitution and laws of the United States which shall be made in pursuance thereof, and all treaties made or which shall be*

*made under the authority of the United States shall be the supreme law of the land, and the judges in every state shall be bound thereby, anything in the constitution or laws of any state to the contrary notwithstanding"*

Those who settled in Illinois, before it became a State, received a pledge from the Congress of the United States, in the ordinance of 1787, that slavery could not be introduced. When the constitution, in conformity with the ordinance, was accepted on that condition, others, in great numbers, repaired to this as a free State, and established themselves in it with entire confidence. They had selected for their abode, a country free, as they thought, from the pollution of slavery and by its constitution ever to remain so.

With this calamity, under which their existence would be a burthen they are now threatened, and the mere apprehension throws a gloom over their prospects. What can the advocates of slavery gain by its introduction, to put in competition with the evil and injustice they would inflict upon these, their fellow citizens?

And is there, then, nothing fixed, nothing secure, in the foundation of our social compact? The blessings promised by a free constitution, can they be taken from us and the greatest of curses given in their room, because pur-blind avarice may have gained a temporary ascendancy? Were it an affair of interest merely, how opposite soever to my judgment, it might take its course. Having stated my opinion I could submit in tranquillity. But there are principles too sacred to be infringed even by a majority, on the plea of interest, or on any plea; and this is such a principle. To *alter* and *amend* the provisions of the constitution, is and ought to be the work of the majority, but not to *destroy* it.

We are a society of free men: Our fundamental laws know no such being as a slave. In this State, every inhabitant is *free by right*, derived from a power paramount to all majorities. Freedom is the basis of our social compact; a majority can regulate the institutions founded on this basis, but the basis itself is impregnable. Necessity, "the tyrant's plea," in those states where slavery is established, supports the distinction of freeman and slave, a distinction abhorrent to reason, to religion, and to nature! Here we have no such plea, and our constitution admits no such distinction. If a majority have the power of affixing the brand of slavery on one portion of the community, where is the limit of this power? What portion is safe? What security remains for you or for me, if we chance to be in the minority?

I trust, fellow citizens, I am not mistaken in my estimate of your general good sense and honorable feeling. But if those persons whose proceedings in the legislature have caused this alarm, are, in fact, a representation of the majority, the friends of freedom have yet a strong hold in the vast majority of the people of the United States, of which we form a comparatively insignificant portion. To this great and enlightened community we have our final appeal; and if, to the indelible disgrace of this government, such an appeal should be necessary, it *must be effectual*. In addressing you, I speak as a citizen of this particular section, confining my view to our own proper

duty as regards this question. We are also citizens of the United States, and, in that capacity, have our share in the compact between Congress and this State, at its admission. I refrain from discussing the validity of that instrument, in regard to both the contracting parties, not from the smallest doubt on the subject, but because it is for us to do our own business, and render a recourse to it unnecessary.

The annals of the republick afford no precedent of a people degrading themselves by reverting to slavery; a system which is the abhorrence of the civilized world, and acknowledged, by all, to be the bane of national prosperity and private happiness. In other states, the changes which have taken place have been on the side of freedom. And shall we, young as we are, cause the only blot, the only blurred page in the history of the Union?

Take a view of the states which have emancipated themselves, and compare them with the slave states: Look at the state of Ohio, and compare it with Kentucky. Here are experiments on a large scale for our instruction, so uniformly decisive against slavery, that, if it were an affair of simple calculation, a question of political arithmetick merely, common sense would teach us to reject it.

How the man of small property fares in a slave state I cannot describe from personal observation, but I have learned so much on the subject from those who have experienced it, that I presume no poor man of sound judgment and independent spirit *can* desire the introduction of slavery. To labour for his living among slaves, or to labour at all where the idea of slavery is so blended with labour as to communicate to it something of disgrace, would be a sad exchange to a very large portion of the citizens of this State, where labour is, as it ought to be, in high and honourable estimation, and the sure road to independence. I have heard that the condition of the poorer description of citizens in slave states is truly miserable: they are compelled to undergo much painful and degrading service in keeping down the slaves, for their wealthy neighbors, who form a sort of upper class—a set of lordly personages, who assume considerable state, and look down upon the industrious man who earns his living by the sweat of his brow.—And a poor living it is that can be earned in a slave country:—for, although it is demonstrable that slave labour is dearer, all things considered, than the labour of freemen, yet, where the former prevails, the latter is not in request;—so that, unless in the pitiful office of overseer or negro driver, the free labourer has not much chance of employment. Fellow citizens! you will reflect seriously on these things, and vote accordingly.

Let us now compare the actual wealth of a free state with that of a slave state, containing the same number of inhabitants, and possessing equal capital. Suppose the number to be 200,000, and half the population of the latter to be slaves. One hundred thousand negroes would be the first line of the account of national wealth with the advocate of slavery. His opponent would reply, that, as the wealth of a nation consists chiefly in the skill, strength, and industry of its productive population, the value of those individuals is not increased by their being slaves;—that the wealth of the state receives no addition in consequence of the productive class being held as the property

of the unproductive. But, admitting them to be property, he would allege, that one hundred thousand of the citizens in the free state, *the property of themselves*, are to be considered as wealth to the community, equal to the number of negroes in the slave state; and being more industrious and efficient as labourers, would place the balance greatly in favour of the free state.

Suppose the capital in each to be forty millions of dollars, it would consist, in the slave state, of a population of 100,000 Negroes, of all ages, at \$200.00 per head ..... \$20,000,000  
Other property..... 20,000,000

\$40,000,000

In the free state it would consist of the property of 200,000 free persons.....\$40,000,000  
100,000 free persons valued at the same rate with 100,000 negroes.. 20,000,000  
Extra value of the labour of a free population compared with a population of masters and slaves.....\*10,000,000

\$70,000,000

Thus it appears that, with equal capital and population, a free state is nearly twice as wealthy as a slave state. But, in the materials of happiness—in moral riches—in the spirit pervading the community how great is the contrast!

In the land of slaves there is despotic power, engendering pride and cruelty, fomented by avarice:—There is contempt of labour, encouraging indolence and its companions, dissipation and profligacy, on the one hand; on the other there is brutal ignorance:—human forms, stripped of all that is estimable in human character; or, if aught remains of the nobility of man, it is that incurable hatred; that obstinacy not to be conquered by torture, and that thirst of vengeance, —which assume the place of virtue in the bosom of a slave, and convert him into a demon.

In the free state, the vices inseparable from tyranny are unknown or strangled at their birth: the meanness, or the malignity, produced by oppression, have no place there. There man holds his proper station; he looks up to no superior but in virtue and knowledge—and down upon no abject dependent.

The contrast does not end here: Moral degradation has its reaction, and is not confined to the degraded class. The vices of the slave have the counterpart in those of the master. The female slaves, sunk below the restraints of moral decorum, and their honour deemed beneath the cognizance of law, become a nursery of vice in every family, and a general dissoluteness of morals is the consequence.—On the part of the whites this horror is superadded: they consign the fruits of their licentiousness to the miseries of perpetual bondage, and their own flesh becomes the object of unnatural and unhallowed traffick!

At what degree, on the scale of turpitude, shall we place the man who, knowing these things, can be induced by sordid interest, to place himself and his posterity, his neighbors and his country, in

\*The difference would be much greater; because the labour of the white population, in a slave state is of little account; Free labour retires from slavery as silver from a base currency. The overseers and the multitude of domestic slaves are also to be deducted; and where negroes are numerous, it is labour enough for the whites to watch them.



such a predicament? and, if a vote should carry the question, every man who holds up his hand in favor of a convention that should introduce it, may hereafter consider himself as the author of all the miseries and the crimes with which slavery would cover this fair portion of the globe. If it fails, as I trust will be the case, he will then have to reproach himself with having been a partaker in the iniquity of the design.

The evils, moral and political, with which our fellow citizens of the slave states are afflicted, are not, let us ever bear in mind, of their own creation. They were entailed upon them by the ignorance or avarice of their predecessors, and permitted by the impolicy of the British government, which departed from its own principles in its colonial legislation. We now stand, in regard to the state of Illinois, in the place of those early settlers of the old states from which the curse of slavery has been handed down to posterity, and of that government which countenanced its establishment. But there is a difference between our position and theirs—in our favor, if we act justly, and to our accumulated disgrace, if otherwise. A century of bitter experience has exposed the abominations of the practice to the whole world; and we cannot now, as they might, avail ourselves of the plea of ignorance. In the present day, where is the man who will stand up in defence of the principle of slavery? Inured to it by education and habit, chained to their slaves as their slaves are chained to them, there are many truly respectable persons who yield to it as a matter of necessity, from which they see no way of escape, and they act as well as they can in their circumstances. Under the shelter of their example, others who are not of that character are laboring to spread the evil—and they merit the execration of all mankind for the attempt, whether they succeed or not.

The happiness of the slave, whose good fortune has given him a benevolent master, is brought forward in triumphant comparison—not with the *happiness* of the freeman—but with his sufferings under the scourge of adversity; and we are to admit, from this partial and false view of the subject, that slavery is preferable to freedom! The man whose heart remains uncorrupted by the possession of absolute power, is an honor to his kind. A society of such men would have little need of the restraints of law and government. But how rare is the virtue that is proof against circumstances so predisposing and impelling to vice! It raises its possessor greatly above the average of his fellows. Happy the slave, if slave he must be, who falls into such hands. Man is, however, at best, a frail creature, subject to caprice, and liable to error and imposition, and therefore not to be trusted so far. He is, moreover, mortal and has not the means of transmitting his virtues, together with his slaves, to his descendants. How must the hand of the good man tremble, and his heart sink within him, when, at the close of his life, he is about to commit to the power of a son, the reverse of himself, those defenceless beings whom he has soothed by his kindness into a forgetfulness of their bondage! Thus is slavery a thing to be rejected even in its mildest character.

Persons who do not defend the principle of slavery, have stated in defence of its extension into new countries, that diffusion of the black population is a mitigation of the evil. Without examining this argument, I shall merely observe, that, whatever may be the value, it does not apply to our case; it is *not* the motive which operates on the advocates for slavery in this state, and suppose it were the motive, as they have no right to serve others at our expense, it cannot be admitted as an apology for the outrage they would inflict on their fellow citizens. In the next place, if we admit that diffusion might, in a supposed case of crowded population, lessen the immediate pressure, that case has not yet been made out. Where slaves are more numerous, I believe they are also at the highest price, and are not, therefore, likely to be transferred to a country where they are of less value. In the third place, the new states to the south, with the addition of Missouri, besides immense tracts of uncultivated lands in Georgia, Kentucky, &c., afford ample scope for the *diffusion* of slavery, without breaking faith with the United States and the friends of freedom in Illinois, by admitting it here. Therefore the argument, such as it is, has no relation to us. Yet, if the scheme of these benevolent diffusers of slavery included a plan for its gradual but certain and effectual abolition, their proposals would deserve attention. Their plan, on the contrary, tends to its indefinite continuance, as well as extension. In the licentiousness of assertion, which seems to be indulged on this subject beyond most others, as is natural where there is no basis for sound argument; it is added by reasoners, who ought to blush at the absurdity, that, *whilst diffusion mitigates the misery of slaves, it does not add to their number*. Are there fewer slaves in the five old slave-holding states than existed previous to the settlement of Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Missouri? Was Europe, or even Africa, drained of inhabitants by peopling America? Those provinces of Spain which contributed most to the settlement of South America, increased in population beyond the rest of the kingdom. Has not the extension or *diffusion* of the general population, from thirteen states to twenty-four, increased the number of people in this republic? It is a fact established by experience that vacancies made by emigration are filled up by the stimulus of a more favorable proportion between the means of subsistence and the number of inhabitants; and whilst a population is created in a new country, the old country is relieved—and the effect of this relief, in giving a spring to population, is even greater than its numerical amount; so that the parent state becomes more populous by disseminating her offspring. Slave population increases according to the the same law; if diffusion mitigates their sufferings, it increases their number, and the room they leave behind them is soon filled up, as in other cases.

But such is the criminality of slavery, and so completely has that criminality been exposed, that it seems to me to be incumbent on all man-kind who are blessed with freedom, to protest against the ordinances of the government which tolerates it, without providing for its abolition, and to make common cause in favor of their degraded brethren in every country. The principles of universal justice are

clear, and the duty of resistance to oppression, engraven on every heart, is inseparable from the duty of aiding the weak who are unable to protect themselves. This would better merit the appellation of a *Holy Alliance* than a combination of sovereigns in support of Legitimacy. The very principle is now in operation, in regard to the African slave trade. Little more than twenty years ago, that commerce was sanctioned by the British government. Fifteen years have hardly elapsed since it was tolerated by the United States. It is now condemned as piracy by both these governments, and they have invited other nations to join them in the employment of force for its extirpation. The trade in slaves, in the interior of the United States, (in art. 1, sect. 9, of the constitution, veiled under the term "Migration,") was, together with the African slave trade, guaranteed against prohibition until the year 1808. The latter has been abolished and declared a capital offense; and if the principle and practice of the former were examined, they would be found to differ, not at all in kind, and but little in enormity. The time surely approaches when the virtue and intelligence, diffused through this republic, will no longer sustain the inconsistency of tolerating the American slave trade, and punishing the African as felony! I crave your indulgence for this digression, and shall now draw to a conclusion.

What think you, fellow citizens, is the compensation proposed by the persons who have, at the expense of reputation and integrity, made those extraordinary efforts for the admission of slavery? We have seen that it cannot favour the sale of land, but will have a contrary effect. We know that the pecuniary distress of the neighbouring slave states is greater than ours. Produce is so low as hardly to pay the charges of carrying it to market. The demand of the old countries, in their present condition, is not equal to the superabundance of the new; and forcing cultivation, in the new countries, by the labour of slaves, is not likely to mend the matter. The natural and easy remedy for this inconvenience, (to call it an evil would be ingratitude) is, to create a market at home, by applying ourselves to manufacture. But slavery would increase the *embarrassment*, and *obstruct the operation of the remedy*. To what motives, then, can their zeal be imputed, except the love of arbitrary power, and aversion to industry—and, with a few ambitious characters, political rivalry?

The following positions have, I think, been fully established: That a convention, held in pursuance of the measures described, would be unconstitutional and illegal, and therefore of no just authority;—because it has not been proposed to the people by a constitutional majority of their representatives, but was, on the contrary, twice negatived by such a majority:

That the admission of slavery would increase our present difficulties, by lowering the price of land and produce—and would be destructive of the future prosperity of the state, and happiness of the people, especially of that very numerous class of citizens who are possessed of but small property, and whose wealth consists in their industry:

That it cannot be introduced but by breaking down the barriers of law and justice—which are, I trust, on too firm a basis to be disturbed

by the intrigues of a corrupt faction. You will therefore agree with me—that we are bound by honour, interest, and duty, to vote, at the approaching election, for *No Convention*.

I was just laying down my pen, when I recollected a strange sentiment entertained by some persons, who, having been brought up among slaves, have not reflected much on the nature of true liberty—that we are not free, because our constitution prohibits slavery—that this country, governed by laws of our own making, where every man, unless he be a criminal, is as free as another, is not a free country—in fine, that the State of Illinois is not a free state, because we have decreed that none but free men shall inhabit it. According to their opinion, if part of the people held the other part in bondage, could buy and sell them, and goad them to labor like cattle, *then* it would be a free country. But freedom, if it exists in reality, extends to all—it is the right to do every thing but injury, and the enjoyment of protection from being injured. Without this restraint, on the one hand, and the protection on the other, liberty is an empty sound. Difference of color makes no difference in the nature of oppression, or in the crime of inflicting it; and that only is a free country where every man in it is protected from oppression.

In this happy and most honourable condition, of equal freedom and protection, we, the citizens of Illinois, now stand. It is the first rank of human society—the last and meanest is that of *master and slave*, to which the transactions of an unconstitutional majority are intended to degrade us. For myself I submit to no such humiliation. To me and mine the entrance of slavery would be the signal of departure, and to many others. It would be a sentence of banishment to us, of exclusion to countless thousands, and, to those who remain, of irretrievable debasement.

To ward off this most calamitous result, I confide, fellow citizens, in your integrity and good sense; for I think you will, on considering the subject, join me in opinion that the principles of justice and humanity, in this case as in all others, are the principles of wisdom—and that cold-hearted, selfish politicians are the greatest fools upon earth.

M. BIRKBECK.

#### POSTSCRIPT.

At sun-rise on this Fourth of July, 1823, when the prairies and the woods are resounding with peals of triumph, I address the following serious expostulation to the attention of my fellow citizens, as my part in the service of this festive day.

The practice of slavery, by a people exulting in their own freedom, is a melancholy instance of human depravity or inconsistency, and shows how we may become reconciled, by custom, to the perpetration of the greatest injustice.

The right to hold a man or a woman in bondage can only arise from forfeiture of liberty by the individual so held; but it is impossible that this forfeiture can extend to their posterity. For example, should slavery, by the will of the majority, be introduced among us



we could only put it in practice, justly, upon the persons of criminals, who had so forfeited their freedom, under the laws of that society from which we procured them, and of this fact we must obtain irrefragable testimony.

Supposing any number of these wretched outcasts, of both sexes, to be received by us and employed on our plantations, what sort of claim could we set up against their children? Could the united votes of all the citizens in the State consign a single infant to bondage because its parents had committed crimes and suffered the penalty? The child born of these parents would have the same natural rights with our own children; the same indefeasible inheritance from nature "of life, of liberty, and the pursuit of happiness;" and would have an additional title to kindness and protection from the unfortunate circumstances of his birth. What would be the course of justice in regard to such children? Their parents having no political rights, they would be received as orphans into the arms of a virtuous and honorable society; they would be the children of the public, and be treated with that tenderness to which the orphan has an irresistible claim from every human being with a heart uncorrupted.

No,—fellow citizens!—all the power of the community, directed to this single point, could not extend the right of slavery beyond the individual who has forfeited his freedom by crime. With the condition of those societies where slavery has taken root we have here no concern. It has no legal existence here. A set of men called legislators, in this state or any other, have no power to give one man a title to the liberty of another, any more than to his life; or to doom infants to servitude, whatever may have been the crimes or complexion of their parents, any more than they have power to order them to be strangled at their birth; which, in fact, would be, of the two, the least criminal proceeding.

Slavery, as offered to us, is a bottomless abyss of wretchedness and iniquity; the inquisition is a mere puddle compared to it! Could you, whilst hovering on the brink, behold it in its horrors, no power on earth could compel you to take the plunge—there would be no need of arguments to restrain you. But they crowd upon me as I meditate on the subject and before I conclude I must add the following for your consideration:

The extent of surface at present occupied by the republick, under the organized jurisdiction of states and territories is a little more than one million of square miles. It appears that slavery is tolerated over 650,000 square miles and prohibited over 402,000—thus, the extent of territory open to slaves is greater, by about one-fourth of the whole, than that from which they are excluded!

It also appears, from the census of 1820, that there were at that time 5,175,080 inhabitants on the *non-slaveholding territory* and only 4,394,963 inhabitants, *including slaves*, on the *slaveholding territory*, though so much more extensive!

Yet under these circumstances, there are persons who speak of *cruelty in penning up the negroes*; and propose, with the humane



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A CONTRIBUTION TOWARD A BIBLIOGRAPHY

OF

MORRIS BIRKBECK

AND THE

English Settlement in Edwards County, Illinois, Founded by Morris  
Birkbeck and George Flower, 1817-18.

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By CHARLES WESLEY SMITH.

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MORRIS BIRKBECK

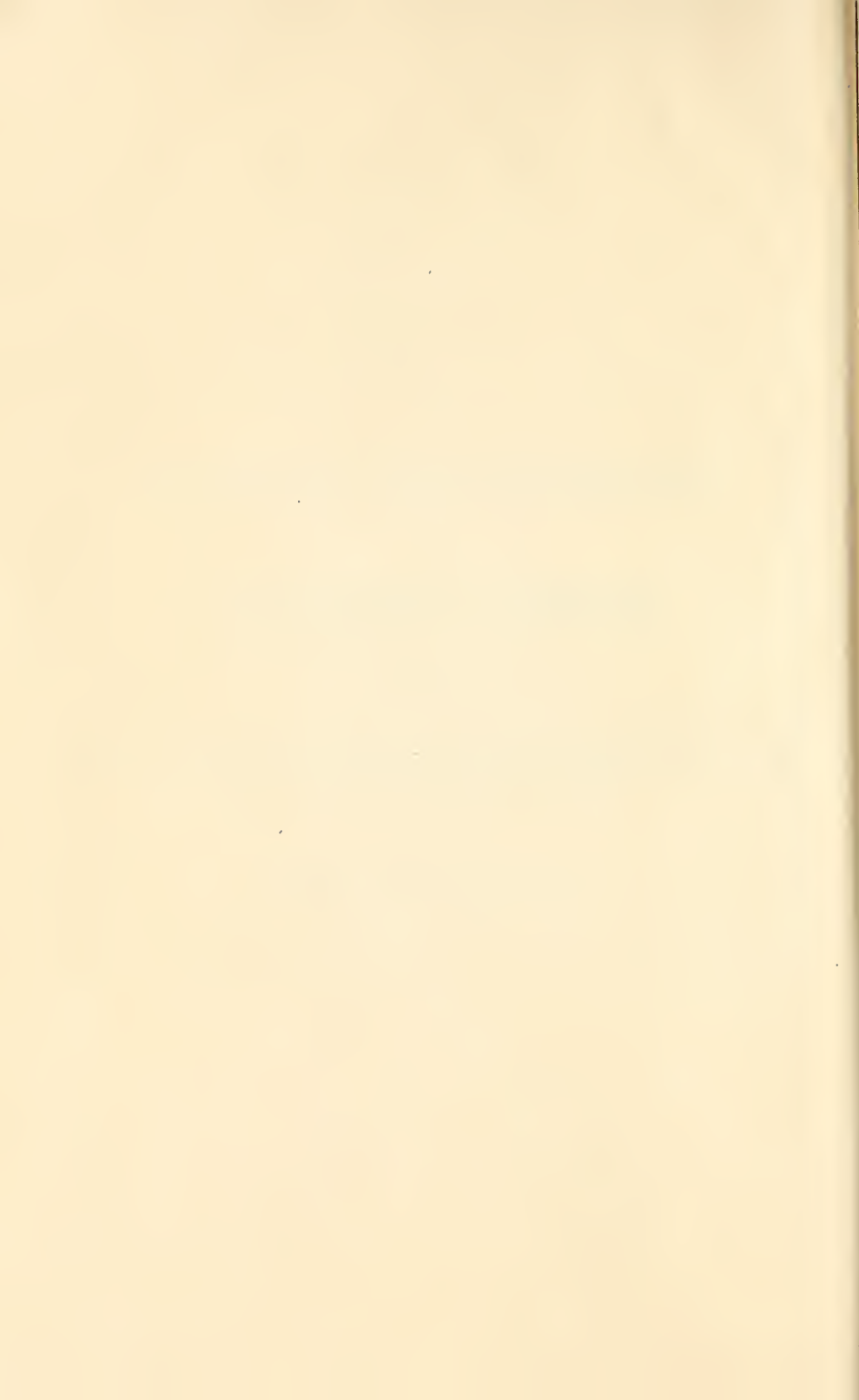
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## INTRODUCTION.

At the suggestion of Professor Evarts B. Greene, of the University of Illinois, the writer began, during the spring of 1905, an examination of material relating to Morris Birkbeck and the founding of the English settlement in Edwards county. The present trial bibliography is a result of this search. It is by no means exhaustive, but it is hoped that its appearance at this time may serve to bring to light additional information and thus hasten the accumulation of material for a complete bibliography.

Morris Birkbeck exerted an influence in the development of the American nation not likely to be overestimated. As author-emigrant, he attracted to the United States, and particularly to Illinois, a large number of especially desirable English settlers. That Birkbeck settled in Illinois was the result of no accident. His hatred of slavery in any form caused him to avoid the slave states and it was his thorough knowledge of agriculture, combined with a keen judgment of values, that led him westward to the prairies. Having once decided upon a point for settlement, his ever active pen, by means of published accounts and personal letters, drew to him many substantial English farmers. In this way he hastened and to some extent guided the course of westward migration.

As an anti-slavery agitator, he rendered a service equalled by few men of his time. Illinois had been admitted to the Union in 1818 as a free state, but the right to hold slaves within her bounds was urgently demanded. Large numbers of immigrants were coming in from the south and the strongest efforts were made during the first years of her statehood to turn Illinois into a slave state. The struggle took the form of a controversy over the question of a convention to amend the State Constitution. As an anti-conventionist, Mr. Birkbeck's power was felt and recognized throughout the state. He took a leading part in the newspaper debates and whether in the homely dispassionate logic of the "Jonathan Freeman" letters or in direct, forceful appeals over his own signature, he was ever earnest and convincing. The English settlers were generally opposed to the convention, so that Birkbeck's service as colonizer, no less than his skill as agitator, was an important factor in this critical campaign. The election of August 2, 1824, resulted in a victory for the anti-convention party and Illinois remained a free state. Without Illinois as a free state one would hardly wish to conjecture on the outcome of later developments which eventually led to the war for the preservation of the Union.

An examination of printed sources of information shows a meager and inadequate literature relating to the life and anti-slavery service of this remarkable man. Of Birkbeck's own writings, his published books, though becoming comparatively rare, are nevertheless readily available to students who can combine the resources of several of the larger libraries. Unfortunately, so much cannot be said of the pamphlets and newspaper articles. Several of the pamphlets seem to be entirely lost, though there is reason to hope that they may yet be found. Much of the contemporaneous newspaper material, however, seems to be hopelessly lost. The periodical in which appeared Birkbeck's principal contributions, including the "Jonathan Freeman" Letters, was the Shawneetown Gazette, the issues of which are practically all lost or destroyed. Files of the Edwardsville Spectator, covering more or less completely the years 1819-25, are available in the library of the Chicago Historical Society and in the St. Louis Mercantile Library—the files in the later library being the more complete and in an excellent state of preservation. In this newspaper, fortunately, can be found, besides a limited amount of original material, copies of articles and letters first printed elsewhere. Ten of the famous "Freeman" letters were thus copied from the Shawneetown Gazette. Birkbeck's writings combined with a wide current interest in the subject of emigration, caused many travelers to visit the English settlement, and numerous published accounts were the result. These descriptions, combined with English and American reviews of the same, give a good idea of the way in which Birkbeck and his Illinois settlement were regarded by contemporaries.

In spite of several disastrous fires,<sup>1</sup> the Chicago Historical Society has in its possession some rare and interesting material, including an engraving of Morris Birkbeck, portraits of Mr. and Mrs. George Flower, and valuable letters and other manuscripts bearing upon the history of the English settlement.

The writer is under special obligation to Professor Greene, of the University of Illinois, at whose suggestion the work was undertaken. Grateful acknowledgement for valued assistance in the collection of material is due to Miss Caroline M. McIlvaine, the efficient librarian of the Chicago Historical Society, and to Mr. William L. R. Gifford, the librarian of the St. Louis Mercantile Library. I shall be grateful also to anyone who will call my attention to inaccuracies, or who will send additional information. Such contributions may be sent to me in care of the Library of the University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, or they may be addressed to the Department of History, University of Illinois.

CHARLES W. SMITH.

Waverly, N. Y., July 25, 1905.

1. The manuscript copy of George Flower's then unpublished History of the English Settlement in Edwards County, together with other valuable Birkbeck material, had been loaned out of the city just before the great fire of 1871.

## WRITINGS OF MORRIS BIRKBECK.

- 1814—Notes on a Journey Through France, from Dieppe through Paris and Lyons, to the Pyrenees, and back through Toulouse, in July, August and September, 1814, describing the habits of the people, and the agriculture of the country. [Edition 1.] 115 p. 8°. London, 1814. W. Phillips. 4s., boards. (Copy in British Museum.)
- Same. Edition 3. 8°. London, 1815. (Copy in British Museum.)
- Same. First American from the third London edition with an appendix. 143+28p. 12°. Philadelphia, 1815. Carey. (Copy examined in the St. Louis Mercantile Library.)
- Same. Edition 5. 115+23 p. apx. London, 1815. W. Phillips. (Copy examined in the Mason collection, Champaign, Ill., Public Library.)

### REVIEWS.

For reviews of Notes on a Journey Through France, see the following:

Monthly Review, January, 1815, (Poole) 76:59-66.

"Mr. Birkbeck is a tourist of no common sort. . . . We recognize in him the true statistical and agricultural observer. . . . He appears to us to have been very diligent and fortunate in his inquiries."

Monthly Review, April, 1815, (Poole) 76:445-47.

Reviews favorably the appendix to the second edition. This appendix would seem to have been issued separately as a 23 p. pamphlet published by Arch & Co., 1815.

- 1817—Notes on a Journey in America, from the coast of Virginia to the Territory of Illinois, with proposals for the establishment of a colony of English. [First American edition.] 189 p. 12°. Philadelphia, 1817. Caleb Richardson. (Copies examined in Newberry Library of Chicago and Buffalo Public Library.)
- Same. [First London edition.] 144 p., map. 12°. London, 1818. Ridgway. (Copy in the Library of Congress.)
- Same. Second London edition. 163 p., fold. map. 8°. London, 1818. Ridgway. [With his Notes on a Journey Through France.] (Copy in Library of Congress.)
- Same. Third London edition. 103 p., fold. map. 8°. London, 1818. Ridgway. (Copies examined in University of Illinois Library and in the Mason collection, Champaign, Ill., Public Library.)
- Same. Fourth London edition. 156 p., map. London, 1818. Ridgway. (Copy examined in St. Louis Mercantile Library.)
- Same. Fifth London edition. 8°. 1819. (Copy in British Museum.)
- Same. Dublin edition. 158 p., fold. map. 12°. Dublin, 1818. Larkin. (Copy in Library of Congress. Also, copy in Illinois State Historical Library.)

The Notes on a Journey in America was also published in Cork, 1818, and in 1819 was translated and published in Paris under the title of "Lettres Sur les Nouveaux Etablissements qui se forment dans les parties occidentales des Etats-Unis Amérique." (See Flower—History of the English settlement in Edwards county, p. 92, note.)

## REVIEWS.

For contemporaneous reviews of *Notes on Journey in America*, see *Edinburgh Review*, June, 1818, 30:120-40.

"One of the most interesting and instructive books that have appeared for many years. . . . The author is an eye witness of everything he describes. . . . He is content to tell what is material without tedious dissertations. . . . His matter is condensed and his style is unexceptionable." p. 120.

*Monthly Review*, February, 1818, 85:146-64.

"Though the present work professes to be only a rapid outline of the most striking features of the country, we believe that Mr. B's. pages convey a more correct idea of its natural resources, and its present state of cultivation, than we can elsewhere obtain. . . . The style is in some parts careless, and in all less polished than in the '*Notes on a Tour Through France*,' the work being evidently written in haste, during his journey." p. 163.

*Portfolio (Dennies')*, March, 1818, (Poole) 19:206-215.

The style of this book is uniformly neat and perspicuous. We are convinced that the author is a man of practical knowledge and that his statements may be received with perfect confidence." p. 215.

*Portfolio (Dennies')*, July, 1819, (Poole) 22:77.

Quotes from a conclusion of a review of Birkbeck's notes in "*The Scotsman*," which it says is in the true Tewkesbury style. "Mr. Birkbeck says little of public affairs, but it is quite obvious that the Americans are far behind the more enlightened nations of Europe in their ideas of legislation and government."

*Quarterly Review*, April, 1818, 19:54-78.

The writer of this review takes a very unfavorable view of American settlement. The book is regarded as an advertisement and Birkbeck and his project are held up to ridicule.

For a recent note of evaluation see

Larned, J. N. ed. *The Literature of American History*. p. 173.

"This is a brief and intelligent account of the journey of an English farmer traveling from Virginia to Illinois Territory, then a frontier settlement. Birkbeck was a radical both in politics and religion and his judgments show a slight bias. He had a keen eye for a suitable place for future settlement and, in agricultural matters, showed practical knowledge. The book gives a vivid picture of the difficulties attending pioneer settlement." From an annotation by D. R. Dewey.

1818—*Letters from Illinois* . . . illustrated by a map of the United States showing Mr. Birkbeck's journey from Norfolk to Illinois and a map of English Prairie and the adjacent country by John Mellish. [Edition 1] 154 p. Philadelphia, 1818. Carey. (Title page bears the motto, "*Vox clamantis à deserto*." Copies examined in the Mason collection, Champaign, Ill., Public Library, and in the St. Louis Mercantile Library.) (Copy in Illinois State Historical Library.)

Same. [Second London edition.] 15+114 p. 8°. London, 1818. Taylor and Hessey. (Copy examined in University of Illinois Library.) (Copy in Illinois State Historical Library.)

Same. Edition 3. 15+114 p. 8°. London, 1818. Taylor and Hessey. [With McLeod, J. *Voyage of His Majesty's Ship Alceste*. . . . London, 1818.] (Copy in Library of Congress.)

Same. 17+126 p. 24°. Boston, 1818. Wells and Lilly. (Copy in Library of Congress.)



## REVIEWS.

For contemporaneous reviews of *Letters from Illinois*, see the following:

Johnson, Dr. C. B. *Letters from the British settlement in Pennsylvania*. 1819, p. 128-47.

The English settlement in Illinois is compared to the one at Montrose, Pa., to the disadvantage of the former. Fears are expressed as to the healthfulness of the settlement and Mr. Birkbeck's aversion to religion is deplored. On pages 144-47 is a "Notice of Mr. Birkbeck's Letters" taken "from the Village Recorder of 18th November. 1818."

Niles Register, 1818, 15:102-3.

Favorably reviewed. "Written by an honest and intelligent gentleman and an Englishman to boot."

North American Review, March, 1819, 8:347-71.

"Has considerable literary merit. . . . He is a shrewd observer, and writes with great ease and vivacity. As to the correctness of the accounts, we will not say that the remark which has been made upon the book, that it is a 'mere advertising puff,' is altogether just, but then it is certainly true that Mr. Birkbeck writes very much like an advocate." p. 347-48.

Portfolio (Dennies'), January, 1819. (Poole) 21:72.

A mere allusion to the Letters and to their publication in London.

Quarterly Review, April, 1818, 19:73-78.

A scathing criticism. The Letters are termed "suppositious epistles" and "dullness" is mentioned as the chief characteristic of the book. "There is nothing in them that can excite the least degree of interest, except, perhaps, in those unfortunate persons whom he may succeed in seducing from the land of their fathers, in order to dispose of that property, which, with all its cheapness, is evidently a dead weight upon his hands."

For a recent note of evaluation, see

Larned, J. N. ed. *The Literature of American History*, p. 173.

"An intelligent, discriminating statement by a foreigner who soon came to understand his adopted country, and did much to inspire English emigration into Illinois." From an annotation by R. G. Thwaites.

Letter to Nathaniel Pope, dated Princeton, Jan. 16, 1818.

Through Mr. Pope, delegate for Illinois Territory in Congress, Morris Birkbeck had memorialized Congress over date of Nov. 20, 1817, for the pre-emption of a tract of land lying some twenty miles north of Wanborough for the purpose of introducing a colony of English farmers. Mr. Pope stated in reply that the petition was too vague for definite action. The letter above referred to explains that extension of payment and not reduction of price was solicited and that the size of tract desired was from 20,000 to 40,000 acres at the pleasure of Congress. The originals of both Mr. Pope's and Mr. Birkbeck's letters are on file in the library of the Chicago Historical Society and copies of both are to be found in Flower's *History of the English Settlement in Edwards County*, p. 81-83. For Birkbeck's Memorial to Congress, see his *Letters from Illinois*, Ed. 2, Letter XXII, p. 108-09.

1819—Extracts from a supplementary letter from the Illinois, dated Jan. 31st, 1819; Address to British emigrants arriving in the eastern ports, July 13th, 1819; Reply to William Cobbett, Esq., July 31, 1819. 29 p. 8°. New York, 1819. C. Wiley & Co. (Copy examined in the Mason collection, Champaign, Ill., Public Library.)

Eight blank leaves (sixteen pages) are bound in at the end of the volume, apparently for the use of emigrants in making notes or memoranda.

Same. 36 p. 8°. London. 1819. Ridgway. [Bound with Notes on a Journey Through France, 3rd edition.] (Copy in the library of the Chicago Historical Society.)

This copy contains also the eight blank leaves at the end and contains an "Extract from a letter to a friend in Yorkshire." An experiment made by the librarian upon the ink has proven that this letter is not a *fac simile* as had previously been supposed, but is more likely an annotation made by the owner of the book—possibly an emigrant. In this interesting volume is inserted also a long sheet of old water-marked paper on which are memoranda forming a rough index to Notes on a Journey in America. (Copy of this edition, bound alone (without Notes on a Journey Through France), in Illinois State Historical Library.)

1820—Letter to Henry S. Dodge, Esq., Secretary of the Agricultural Society, dated Wanborough, April 20, 1820, enclosing an address which Mr. B. was unable to give at the meeting of the Agricultural Society owing to absence. See Edwardsville, Ill., Spectator, June 6, 1820. Two columns.

Letter to Hon. John Reynolds, dated Wanborough, Edwards county, Oct. 22, 1820. See copy in Edwardsville, Ill., Spectator, Nov. 28, 1820. In regard to drainage as a means of increasing the healthfulness of the country.

1821—Letter dated Wanborough, May 7, 1821.

For extract of this letter see Flower's Letters from Lexington and the Illinois, in Thwaites, R. G. ed., Early Western Travels, 10: 149-51.

1822—An address to the farmers of Great Britain, with an essay on the prairies of the western country: to which is annexed the constitution of the State of Illinois. 52 p. 8°. London. 1822. Ridgway. 1s. 6d. (Copy in British Museum; also, copy in Illinois State Historical Library.)

For contemporaneous review of An Address to the Farmers of Great Britain, see

Monthly Review, March, 1823, 181: 250-56.

Favorable. The writer accounts for the hard usage that Mr. B. had received at the hands of British critics by the fact that he was a dissenter from the established administration of England.

Oration delivered at Wanborough, Ill., on July 4, 1822. For text of this oration, see Niles Register, Oct. 5, 1822, 23: 73-75.

At the time of giving this address, Mr. Birkbeck had been five years a resident of America. He took the occasion to compare the advantages of his adopted country with those of European countries. The Register comments thus: "There is much sound sense and wholesome instruction in this product of a late British subject."

1823—Appeal to the people of Illinois on the question of a convention. 25 p. 8°. Shawneetown, 1823. (Copy in the Boston Athenaeum.)

A reprint of this pamphlet appeared in the Edwardsville Spectator for Oct. 11 and Oct. 18, 1823. It is also reprinted in this volume, from the original in the Boston Athenaeum.

1823—"Jonathan Freeman" Letters.

During the month of June and later in the year, 1823, Mr. Birkbeck contributed a series of anti-slavery articles over the signature of "Jonathan Freeman." The majority of these appeared originally in the Shawneetown Gazette, provoking and answering a pro-slavery advocate who signed himself "John Rile." These letters were widely read and exerted no small influence in the struggle then being waged to prevent the introduction of slavery into the



State of Illinois. It is unfortunate that students of Illinois history do not have access to the early files of the Shawneetown Gazette.

Ten of the "Jonathan Freeman" letters are to be found reprinted in the Edwardsville Spectator for Nov. 1 and Nov. 8, 1823, and an additional letter replying to "W. K." appears in the number for Nov. 29, 1823. Twelve of the "Freeman" letters, including four not in the Edwardsville Spectator, are contained in Flower's History of the English Settlement in Edwards County, p. 210-42.

1824—Letter, to the editor of the Illinois Gazette, dated "Wanborough, Jan. 6, 1824." This letter was in reply to one which had appeared in the Illinois Gazette for Jan. 3, signed "Americanus." For reprint see Flower, History of the English Settlement in Edwards county, p. 243-44.

Letter, "to Americanus," dated "Wanborough, Feb. 18, 1824.

This letter was written "For the Intelligencer." It appeared in the Edwardsville Spectator for March 16, 1824, and is also to be found in Flower's History of the English Settlement in Edwards county, p. 244-45.

"An address to the citizens of Illinois for the day of election, and worthy of their serious attention preparatory thereto."

This was printed in the Illinois Gazette just before the election of Aug. 2, 1824. It was also published as a handbill and its free distribution is believed to have aided very materially in the defeat of the convention party. For copy of this address see Flower, History of the English Settlement in Edwards County, p. 207-09.

1825—Letter, addressed to "Fellow Citizen," appearing in the Edwardsville Spectator for Feb. 1, 1825

Mr. Birkbeck had been appointed by Governor Coles as Secretary of State. On the assembling of the Legislature his nomination was rejected by a pro-slavery senate. In this letter Mr. B. names the men who voted for and against his confirmation.

## MORRIS BIRKBECK AND THE ENGLISH SETTLEMENT IN EDWARDS COUNTY, ILLINOIS.

### BIOGRAPHY OF MORRIS BIRKBECK.

Berry, Dr. Daniel.

Morris Birkbeck and His Friends. (See Illinois State Historical Society. Transactions, 1904, p. 259-73.)

Throws light on the times of Birkbeck and emphasizes the part played by the itinerant preacher in the anti-convention struggle. Portrait and *fac simile* of signature opposite p. 259.

Death of Morris Birkbeck. (See Niles Register, July 9, 1825, 28:304.)

Mr. Birkbeck was drowned while returning home from a visit to Mr. Owen at New Harmony.

(An) English View of Birkbeck. (See Quarterly Review, April, 1822, 27:91.)

"Mr. Birkbeck, in fact, hunted through every shape, will always be found to settle at last in that of the hard-hearted, selfish, greedy, avaricious and unprincipled land-jobber."

President of the Illinois State Agricultural Society. (See Edwardsville Spectator, Dec. 26, 1820.)

Mr. Birkbeck was elected first president of the Illinois State Agricultural Society.

Reynolds, John.

Birkbeck an Early Settler. (See his My Own Times, 1855, p. 286-87.

Speaks of Birkbeck's services as a colonizer. Inaccuracies.

Secretary of State, Appointment as. (See Niles Register, Nov. 20, 1824, 27:192.)

Secretary of State. Rejection. (See *Edwardsville Spectator*, Feb. 1, 1825.)

A letter dated Vandalia, Jan. 18, 1825, over the signature of Geo. Churchill speaks of the regret occasioned by the rejection of Mr. Birkbeck as Secretary of State.

Secretary of State. Resolution of thanks. (See *Edwardsville Spectator*, Feb. 1, 1825.)

Resolution of House of Representatives thanking Mr. Birkbeck for the way he had discharged his duties as Secretary of State.—Adopted Jan. 15, 1825, by vote of 27 to 4.

Some Account of Morris Birkbeck. (See *Portfolio* (Dennies'), (Poole) 34:445.)

Washburne, E. B.

Morris Birkbeck. (See *Sketch of Edward Coles*, 1882. Use Index.)

## BIRKBECK AS ANTI-SLAVERY AGITATOR.

Flower, George.

Anti-Slavery Services of Morris Birkbeck. (See his *History of the English Settlement in Edwards County*, 1882, p. 197-256.)

The best account available.

Ford, Thomas.

Morris Birkbeck. (See *History of Illinois*, 1854, p. 54.)

Birkbeck mentioned as a writer of fiery handbills against the convention.

Harris, N. D.

Birkbeck as Anti-slavery Advocate. (See his *History of Negro Servitude in Illinois*, 1904, p. 42, 44, 48.)

Brief mention: Reference is made to five important newspapers in Illinois at the time of the anti-convention controversy and their stand upon the slavery question is indicated.

Moses, John.

Morris Birkbeck. (See his *Illinois, Historical and Statistical*, 1889, vol. 1, p. 322.)

Birkbeck "published a pamphlet which is said to have contained the best arguments presented against slavery."

Wilson, Henry.

Anti-slavery Agitation in Illinois. (See his *History of the Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America*, 1878, vol. 1, p. 164.)

Birkbeck mentioned in connection with the attempt to introduce slavery into Illinois.

## THE ENGLISH SETTLEMENT IN EDWARDS COUNTY, ILLINOIS, FOUNDED BY MORRIS BIRKBECK AND GEORGE FLOWER, 1817-1818.

Cobbett, William.

*A Year's Residence in the United States of America*. London, 1819. In three parts. Part III, pages 439-610, containing "Mr. Hulmes' Introduction to his Journal; Mr. Hulmes' Journal made during a tour in the western countries of America, in which tour he visited Mr. Birkbeck's settlement; Mr. Cobbett's letters to Mr. Birkbeck remonstrating with that gentleman on the numerous delusions contained in his two publications, entitled, 'Notes on a Journey in America' and 'Letters from Illinois.'" Mr. Cobbett accused Birkbeck of wilful misrepresentation and discounted the Illinois prairies as a place for settlement. For review of *A Year's Residence*, alluding to Cobbett's attack on the Birk-

beck plan of emigrating to the prairies, see the Tickler letters in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, September, 1823, 14:319-26. Mr. Cobbett's A Year's Residence had a wide circulation, passing through at least five different editions.

Books on American Travel. (See Edinburgh Review, July, 1824, 40:427-42.)  
Reviews of Duncan. Hodgson and "An English Gentleman."  
Birkbeck referred to, p. 440, in connection with Mr. Rapp and the Harmonites.

Faux, W.

Birkbeck's Settlement in the Illinois. (See his Memorable Days in America,\* 1823, p. 250-312.)

Mr. Faux visited the English settlement in 1819 and his account of it attracted much attention in the English reviews. He seems not to have been a very systematic observer and his descriptions betray a certain vulgarity of mind. Notwithstanding the blemishes of his account, however, it is an important contribution to our knowledge of the settlement.

For reviews of Memorable Days in America, see the following:

Blackwood's Magazine, November, 1823, 14:561-72; Monthly Review, December, 1823, 183:443-45, and Westminster Review, January, 1824, 1:101-15.  
Fearon, Henry Bradshaw.

Sketches of America. (See his Narrative of a Journey of Five Thousand Miles through the Eastern and Western States of America . . . with remarks on Mr. Birkbeck's Notes and Letters. London, 1818, p. 395-440.)

Adverse criticism. The author was never at the English settlement. "Mr. Fearon's book of travels, although appearing under his own name, it is said, was edited and published by the poet-laureate, and so worded by him as to give an unfavorable turn to everything American in the eyes of the English emigrant."—Flower. History of the English Settlement in Edwards County, p. 195.

See review in Edinburgh Review, Dec. 1818, 31:132 ff. Very little about Birkbeck.

Ferrall, S. A.

Albion village. (See his Ramble of Six Thousand Miles through the United States of America. London, 1832, p. 109-12.)

Speaks of Albion as a small, insignificant town. Says that Mr. Birkbeck is here called the "Emperor of the Prairies," but that he is respected in other parts of the State.

Flower, George.

History of the English Settlement in Edwards County, Illinois. Founded in 1817 and 1818, by Morris Birkbeck and George Flower. Chicago, 1882. (Chicago Historical Society's collection, Vol. 1.)

An invaluable source of information written by one of the founders. The inception and early history of the settlement are fully given and later developments down to the year 1860 are noted.

Flower, Richard.

Letters from Lexington and the Illinois. London, 1819.

Written while Mr. Richard Flower was journeying from Lexington, Ky., where he had spent the winter, to Albion, Ill., the home of his son, George Flower.

Flower, Richard.

Letters from the Illinois, 1820-1. London, 1822.

"Describing the condition and environment of Birkbeck's English colony at Albion, Illinois. . . . Written to encourage migration and to refute the charges against the region made by William Cobbett in his Weekly Political Register during the year 1821." E. E. Sparks in Larned, Literature of American History, p. 175.

\* Faux, W. (An English farmer.)

Memorable Days in America, being a journal of a tour to the United States, principally undertaken to ascertain by positive evidence the condition and probable prospects of British emigrants, including accounts of Mr. Birkbeck's settlement in the Illinois, and intended to show men and things as they are in America. 488 p. 8". London, 1823. Simpkin. 14s. bds.

German Emigration in America. (See *North American Review*. July, 1820. 9:1-19.)

Birkbeck's letters referred to as having popularized the colony at Harmony. p. 13.

Healthfulness of the English Settlement. (See *Niles Register*. April 15. 1820. 18:117.)

A statement correcting misrepresentation as to healthfulness of the country inhabited by Mr. Birkbeck and his associates. Population of settlement given as about 400.

Hodgson, Adam.

Birkbeck's Illinois Settlement. (See his *Letters from North America*, written during a tour in the United States and Canada. 1824, Vol. 2. p. 65, 78.

Unfavorable view of the settlement. See *Monthly Review*. November, 1824, (Poole) 105:245-62; also. *Westminster Review*, April, 1825. 3:469-70.

Hulme, Thomas.

The English Settlement in Illinois. (See his *Journal of a Tour in the Western Countries of America*. Sept. 30, 1818-Aug. 8, 1819, as reprinted in *Thwaites ed. Early Western Travels*. Vol. 10. p. 19, 47-51.)

A generally favorable view of Birkbeck's settlement which was used, however, by Wm. Cobbett as a basis for an attack.

Improvements at Albion. (See *Niles Register*, May 19, 1821. 20:192.)

Johnson, Dr. C. B.

Remarks on Birkbeck's Letters. (See his letters from the British settlement in Pennsylvania. 1819, p. 128-41.)

Unfavorable view of the settlement. (See review of Johnson's letters in *Portfolio* (Dennies'), March, 1819. 21:238-47.)

Letter regarding the settlement at Albion. (See *Niles Register*. Nov. 6, 1819. 17:146-47.)

Extract of a letter to the Register. Attempts to correct false impressions created by Mr. Cobbett. Mentions the public library at Albion.

Library at Albion. (See *Edwardsville Spectator*, Dec. 26, 1820.)

Refers to the establishment of a library and a reading society in Albion. Mr. Richard Flower credited as being the founder and promoter.

The public library at Albion was founded in 1818 and attracted the attention of distinguished visitors and reviewers. It was housed in one part of a brick building used for a market house. It was free to the public and was open on Sunday afternoons. Allusions to the library are found in several of the references elsewhere given. W. Faux, in his *Memorable Days*, 1823, p. 269, speaks thus:

"A good market house and a public library is at the end [of Albion], in which a kind of Unitarian worship is held on Sunday, when a sermon and the church service purified is read by any one who pleases. The books are donations from the Flower family and their friends in England. By sending donations, people become honorary members, and Mrs. Flower has by all legal means secured perpetuity to this institution which few expect to find in this distant wilderness."

George Flower, in his *History of the English Settlement*, p. 328-29, names some of the principal donors of books and mentions as drawbacks to the usefulness of this early collection, the character of the community and the absence of a fund for a salaried librarian.

Population of the English settlement. (See *Niles Register*. Jan. 27, 1821. 19:358.)

Population of Albion is given as 700. Settlement said to be prosperous. The library is mentioned.

*Portfolio* (Dennies'), November, 1819. (Poole) 22:434.

The writer of "Literary Intelligence" refers to a reviewer who, in the last number of the *British Review*, had regretted not having room to quote from Dr. Johnson's letters from the British settlement which he terms "an exposition of the fallacious statements contained in Mr. Birkbeck's letters from Illinois."



Peck, J. M.

The Settlement at Albion. (See his *Gazetteer of Illinois*, ed. 2, 1837, p. 101.)

Brief notice.

Stuart, James

Visit to the English Settlement. (See his *Three Years in America*, ed. 2, Edinburgh, 1833, vol. 2, p. 362-63, 380-402.)

Favorable account. Mr. Stuart visited Albion in May, 1830, twelve years after its founding. He regarded Birkbeck's statements as generally correct, but believed that he had been misinformed as to the price of farm labor.

Walsh, Robert, Jr.

Birkbeck's Travels. (See his *Appeal from the Judgments of Great Britain Respecting the United States of America*, London, 1819, p. 234-37.)

Points out inconsistencies in British reviewers as illustrated by the various reviews of Birkbeck's Travels. (For review of Walsh's Appeal, see *Portfolio* (Dennies') December, 1819. (Poole.) 22:493-515.)

Welby, Adlard.

A Visit to North America and the English Settlements in Illinois, with a winter residence in Philadelphia. London, 1821.

Unfavorable. Mr. E. B. Washburne, in a note to Flower's *History of the English Settlement*, p. 319, says: "The book would seem to disclose that his [the author's] real object was to decry the country and discourage the emigration of the English to it. It is written in a spirit of mean prejudice and is full of misrepresentation and abuse."

Woods, John.

Life in the English Settlement. (See his *Two Years' Residence in the Settlement on the English Prairie in the Illinois Country*, London, 1822, p. 141-304.)

Favorable view. Written by a practical English farmer, who came to Albion, Ill., in June, 1820. A trustworthy account, giving many details of actual every-day experiences in this pioneer English settlement. Reprinted in Thwaites' ed. *Early Western Travels*, vol. 10, p. 260-351.

Wright, Frances.

(The) Settlement at Albion. (See her *Views of Society and Manners in America*, ed. 2, London, 1822, p. 235-38.)

Favorable account. Library and postoffice mentioned. Two mails a week.





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